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Archaeological
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EXAMINATION OF THE CONTENTS OF A MYCENAEAN VASE FOUND IN EGYPT

THE vase is of the common Mycenaean form known as the stirrup jug, and belongs to the Way Collection of Egyptian Antiquities in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.[1] It bears the number P. 795.

As a result of the examination of the substance contained in the vase, all that can be definitely stated of its original nature is that it was some preparation of cocoanut oil. At present it seems free from starch, sugar, cellulose, tannins, alkaloids, and glucosides, and nearly free from albuminoids; besides cocoanut fat, it appears to consist mainly of acids, resins, and humin. On ignition at a temperature below redness it leaves 9½ per cent of ash. Sodium, potassium, iron, calcium, magnesium, sulphates, and chlorides were found qualitatively, — the last two in small amount. Phosphates were absent. Nitrogen is present to the extent of 0.14 per cent. Sixteen per cent of the substance is soluble in petroleum ether. It is also soluble in alcohol to a considerable degree, and is practically all dissolved by dilute caustic soda. The use of the substance originally would seem to be doubtful. Its composition would certainly indicate that it was not intended for food. The narrow neck of the vessel containing it would seem to indicate that it was introduced in the fluid condition. The substance

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[1] This collection was formed in Egypt, between 1828 and 1833, by Mr. Robert Hay, of Linplum, East Lothian. The vase in question is included with three others under No. 734 of the sale catalogue (1869). It is about five inches high, and is decorated with horizontal bands of reddish brown. No details concerning the place or circumstances of its discovery are known, but inasmuch as the collection was formed in Egypt, it is probable that the vase was found in an Egyptian tomb. — H. N. F.

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may originally have been fluid or have been melted when it was used. It melts at a low temperature. This would permit of its being used as a paint or varnish, and it may have had some application in the preparation of mummies. The composition of the resins found in it corresponds most closely to that of modern shellac.

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